Francis Bernard was born in a beautiful part of France (Mathieu, Calvados). Through the influence of his family, his life was directed from the very beginning to the observation of nature. Teaching activities and research occupied nearly all his life, which was divided between two very dissimilar fields of research: oceanography and myrmecology. He was extremely productive in both. In 1935 he joined the staff of the Institut Océanographique de Paris, and in 1939 was named "maître assistant" at the University of Lyon; two years later he went, as Professor, to the University of Algiers, where he choose to remain 30 years before returning to France. During his life he was honoured on several occasions, and received five entomological prizes from the Société Zoologique de France and the Académie des Sciences. He was honorary member of the French Section of the I.U.S.S.I.

From 1936 to 1973 he published some 75 works on diverse aspects of oceanography of the Mediterranean (plankton, productivity, Coccolithophoridae), and participated in three bathyscaphe dives. Though his Ph. D. thesis was on the morphogenesis of the arthropod eye, he soon moved on, first to diverse small Hymenoptera (Aculeata), then restricting his interests to ants. Author of two books on ants and co-author of some volumes of the "Traité de Zoologie" edited by P. P. Grassé, he issued some 70 papers, especially on the distribution, competition and general ecology of ants in North Africa, southern Europe and the Mediterranean islands. Especially valuable were the results of his trips to Fezzân and the Tassili des Ajjer (Central Sahara). No other myrmecologist has ever visited this very peculiar region.
His ant collection, housed in the Muséum National d’Histoire Naturelle (Paris), contains a majority of specimens from North Africa and the Mediterranean region of France, and has the types of nearly all species described by him. It remains to be studied carefully, since it still contains unidentified material. Even if his scientific work is disputable in some aspects, mainly taxonomic (but how provoking it can be to have something to fight against!), he had in large amounts some of the qualities usually associated with the scientific human: curiosity, obstinacy when confronted with a problem, and engaging and long-lasting enthusiasm: at 77 he suffered an accident when looking for ants, laying alone for two nights “à la belle étoile” near Nice. Some of his last papers (antennal club size, ant speed) contain interesting suggestions that deserve further attention. He could also easily change his opinion and accept other views, if expounded correctly.

In 1978 I met him for the first time, just after his retirement. For a beginner, to be invited to discuss with him and have a look at his collection was an interesting opportunity. From then on, we exchanged no less than 80 letters. Each of his was a pleasure to read: his vast culture, fondness of “jeux de mots” and “charades” were delightful and tempting to imitate. Every true person who knew Professor Bernard will ever remember him as a nonchalant, sympathetic and kind colleague.

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